NORTH
KANSAS CITY
SCHOOLS
est. 1913

Educational Support Services - Paul Fregeau, Executive Director - 816.413.5041

Date: March 7, 2008

To: Dr. Tom Cummings, Superintendent

From: Dr. Paul Fregeau

CC: Jill Smith

Re: Request for Reconsideration of Materials

Per board policy, KLB-AP, a committee met on March 6, 2008 for the purpose of reviewing a request for reconsideration of materials.

The committee convened and deliberated the educational merit and age appropriateness of the book, The Unthinkable Thoughts of Jacob Green, by Joshua Braff.

The committee considered the following options:

- Retained without restriction.
- Retained with restriction.
- Not retained.

Committee members reviewed the district "Instructional Materials" policy. Members concentrated on "judging the material as a whole, taking into account the purpose of the material rather than individual and isolated expressions or incidents of the work. Reviews were obtained from multiple sources.

The Reconsideration Committee reached consensus to **"retain without restriction"** based upon the above information.

We appreciate the work of the committee to arrive at this decision. Please let me know if you have further questions.

NORTH
KANSAS CITY
SCHOOLS
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Educational Support Service – Dr. Paul Fregeau, Executive Director – 816.413.5041

March 7, 2008

Re: Request for Reconsideration of Materials

Dear

Please accept this letter as the formal notification of the result of your request for reconsideration regarding "The Unthinkable Thoughts of Jacob Green". Per board policy, KLB-AP, a committee met on March 6, 2008 for the purpose of reviewing a request for reconsideration of materials.

The committee convened and deliberated the educational merit and age appropriateness of the book, The Unthinkable Thoughts of Jacob Green, by Joshua Braff.

The committee considered the following options:

- Retained without restriction.
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Committee members reviewed the district "Instructional Materials" policy. Members concentrated on "judging the material as a whole, taking into account the purpose of the material rather than individual and isolated expressions or incidents of the work. Reviews were obtained from multiple sources.

The Reconsideration Committee reached consensus to **"retain without restriction"** based upon the above information.

Please understand the committee has reviewed your request thoroughly and I hope you can appreciate the position it took in regards to this request. If you would like to appeal this decision you would need to submit a letter within five business days to:

The Superintendent of Schools
North Kansas City Schools
2000 N.E. 46th Street
Kansas City, MO 64116

Thank you for following the proper process and making us aware of your concerns. If you have any questions, please call me at (816) 413-5041.

Sincerely,

Dr. Paul Fregeau

Paul Fregeau, Ed.D.
Executive Director
Educational Support Services

Pc: Dr. Thomas Cummings, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Todd White, Associate Superintendent of Educational Programs
Ms. Jill Smith, Library Media Coordinator

CHECKLIST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS
FICTION & OTHER LITERARY FORMS

Title Unthinkable Thoughts of Jacob Green
Author Joshua Braff
Format print book

Purpose

1. What is the overall purpose, theme, or message of the material? adolescent
2. Is the purpose accomplished? ✓ Yes _____ No
3. If the story is fantasy, is it the type that has imaginative appeal? _____ Yes _____ No _____ NA
 Suitable for: children Young adults
 If both were marked no, for what age group would you recommend? _____
4. Will reading, viewing and/or listening to the material result in a greater understanding of human beings? ✓ Yes _____ No _____ NA Jewish faith
5. Does it offer an opportunity to better understand and appreciate the aspirations, achievements, and problems of various minority groups? ✓ Yes _____ No _____ NA
6. Are any questionable elements of the story an integral part of a worthwhile theme or message? _____ Yes _____ No _____ NA

Content

1. Does the material give a realistic picture of life as it is now? ✓ Yes _____ No _____ NA
2. Does the story avoid an oversimplified view of life? _____ Yes _____ No _____ NA
3. When factual information is part of the story, is it presented accurately? _____ Yes _____ No _____ NA
4. Are concepts presented appropriate to the ability and maturity of the potential reader/viewer/listener? ✓ Yes _____ No
5. Do characters speak in a language true to the period and section of the country in which they live? _____ Yes _____ No _____ NA
6. Does the material offend in some special way the sensibilities of women or a minority group by the way it presents either the chief character or any of the minor characters? _____ Yes ✓ No
7. Are there excessive instances with sex, violence, cruelty, brutality, and/or aberrant behavior that would make this material inappropriate? _____ Yes ✓ No _____ NA
 Suitable for: Children Young adults
8. Is the language appropriate to the purpose of the material? ✓ Yes _____ No _____ NA reality
9. Does the material give a broader understanding of human behavior without stressing differences of class, race, color, sex, education, religion, or philosophy in any way? _____ Yes _____ No

CHECKLIST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS
FICTION & OTHER LITERARY FORMS

10. Does the material make a significant contribution to the history of literature or ideas?
_____Yes _____No_____NA
11. Are the illustrations realistic in relation to the story? _____Yes _____No ✓ NA
12. Are the illustrations appropriate and in good taste? _____Yes _____No ✓ NA
13. Is the material well written or produced? ✓ Yes _____No

Reviews

1. Review sources:_____

Favorably reviewed yes Unfavorably reviewed _____

2. Does this title appear on award lists? ✓ Yes _____No
If so, which lists? 10 Top Ten for Young Adults 2005

Additional comments
Knew "Jacob,"

Recommendation by Review Committee:

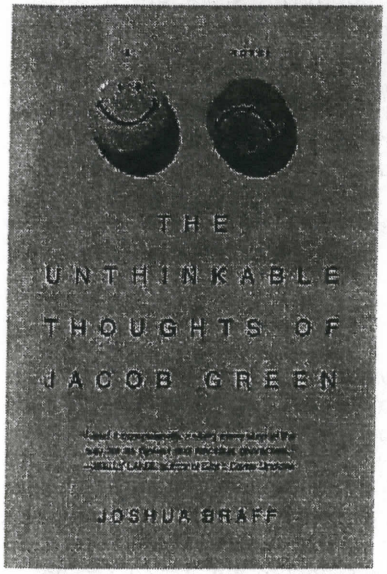
☒ Retain without restriction
~~☒ Retain with restriction~~
☐ Do not retain

Date_____

Signature of Review Committee Members

Dan Walter _____
Jeanie Parkins _____
Carla Dare _____
Paul Treyger _____

BARNES&NOBLE
www.bn.com



The Unthinkable Thoughts of Jacob Green

Joshua Braff

Paperback - Reprint

Average Customer Rating:
★★★★½ (7 ratings)

- Publisher: Penguin Group (USA)
- Pub. Date: September 27, 2005
- ISBN-13: 9780452286702
- Sales Rank: 154496
- 272 pp

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$12.60 Members Price

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Synopsis

It's 1977. Jacob Green, a Jewish kid from suburban New Jersey, sits on the stairs during his family's housewarming party, waiting for his father, Abram--charming host, everyone's best friend, and amateur emcee--to introduce him to the crowd. Housewarming parties, *Annie Hall* parties, and bar mitzvah parties punctuate Jacob's childhood and require command performances by all the Green family members. But when the confetti settles and the drapes are drawn, the affable Abram Green becomes an egotistical tyrant whose emotional rages rupture the lives of his family.

Jacob doesn't mean to disappoint his father, but he can't help thinking the most unthinkable (and very funny) thoughts about public-school humiliation, Hebrew-school disinclination, and in-home sex education (with the live-in nanny!). If only his mother hadn't started college at thirty-six (and fallen for her psychology professor). If only he were more like his rebellious older brother (suspended from Hebrew school for drawing the rabbi in a threesome with a lobster and a pig). If only Jacob could confront his overbearing father and tell him he doesn't want to sing in synagogue, attend est classes, write the perfect thank-you note, or even live in the same house with Abram Green. But, of course, he can't. That would be unthinkable.

This self-assured, comic, yet piercing first novel deftly captures the struggle of an imperfect boy trying to become a suitable son.

Publishers Weekly

A witty, sensitive boy observes the darkly humorous goings-on in his Orthodox Jewish family in 1970s New Jersey. Jacob Green idolizes his older brother, Asher, and misses his withdrawn mother, Claire, but his father, the charismatic, tyrannical Abram, dominates the family. At 10, Jacob's unthinkable sin of forgetting to wear his tzitzit to yeshiva sets off an amusing chain of events Asher's scheming to trick the rabbi, the destruction of the rabbi's tzitzit and Jacob's suspension that quickly turns sober when Jacob faces his father's rage. At 13, Jacob lives in a state of anxiety his learning disability and his father's resulting disappointment erode his confidence; Asher withdraws into adolescence; his mother flees the house to pursue a Ph.D. and another man. Jacob would love to rebel (he's got "a father so far up my ass you can see him performing in my pupils"), but mostly he mentally rewrites his bar mitzvah thank-yous as rants and fantasizes about his live-in babysitter, Megan. When Claire and Abram divorce and Megan moves out, Jacob conveys his angst through a series of letters addressed to Megan. By the time he's 15, Jacob is painfully lonely, as he shuttles between his father's oppressiveness and his mother's honeymooning obliviousness. Although Jacob is a likable, funny narrator, his keen observation and vibrant imagination falter under the weight of Abram's presence and Claire's absence. Agent, Sonia Pabley. (Sept. 10) Copyright 2004 Reed Business Information.

- VOYA

Pity Jacob Green: He worships his rebellious artist older brother, Asher. He lusts in his heart (and loins) for his shiksa goddess nanny, Megan. And he stews in a volatile marinade of fear, adoration, and resentment of his

alternately loving and tyrannical father, Abram, whose constant demands for perfection in all matters-from personal appearance to the crafting of thank-you notes for Bar Mitzvah presents-cause his family to implode. Each episode of Jacob's mortifyingly funny struggles to find the correct responses to Abram's commands, while following his own internal compass, explodes with hilarity even as it brings a lump to the throat. Braff's mastery of the set piece is a mixed blessing: Asher and Jacob's expulsion from their yeshiva, Abram's over-the-top family theatricals, and Jacob's sexual encounter with Megan are such memorable, powerful scenes that they render the narrative a bit too choppy. Still, Jacob's clear, sympathetic voice is irresistible, and one of the book's richest rewards is the unmasking of the fearsome, abusive Abram as not so much a monster as a pitiable, petulant child in the body of a respected adult. Sexually frank and ferociously skeptical of religious and parental authority, this novel will find fans among more mature readers whose taste runs to memoirs such as This Boy's Life by Tobias Wolff (Atlantic Monthly, 1989/VOYA February 1990) or novels like Myla Goldberg's Bee Season (Doubleday, 2000) and Chaim Potok's My Name Is Asher Lev (Knopf, 1972), but who are not quite ready for Philip Roth. VOYA CODES: 4Q 3P S A/YA (Better than most, marred only by occasional lapses; Will appeal with pushing; Senior High, defined as grades 10 to 12; Adult-marketed bookrecommended for Young Adults). 2004, Algonquin, 255p., Ages 15 to Adult.

School Library Journal
Adult/High School-Jacob's unthinkable thoughts are typical of many adolescents, and some might even be considered unprintable. They are also extremely funny and poignant. His father, who is obsessively anxious to be seen as the head of a perfect Jewish family, is acutely conscious of his background and resents the fact that his parents didn't raise him with knowledge of his faith and heritage. He is determined to make this up in his children's education, forging ahead with this plan (and so many others) with little concern for the feelings or interests of his children or his wife, who ultimately leaves. He has already alienated the boy's older brother, Asher, and 11-year-old Jacob becomes the "good son," who "reads Hebrew so beautifully it'll make you cry." Jacob's thoughts progress from the relatively innocent desire to skip Hebrew school to the erotic when he watches television curled up with the au pair. He loves his father, understands his mother, and idolizes Asher, fantasizing that he can escape with him as he enters college, even figuring out what train to take and how to pay for it all. Yet as the novel ends, 15-year-old Jacob is still shuttling between his mother's home and his father's increasing desire for perfection in his environs. The teen's life is difficult and his relationships conflicted, but he does not whine, moving through it all doing the best he can. A funny and thought-provoking coming-of-age journey.-Susan H. Woodcock, Fairfax County Public Library, Chantilly, VA Copyright 2004 Reed Business Information.

Kirkus Reviews
Scarifyingly funny debut limns a suburban boy's struggle to cope with the Jewish Father from Hell. The ghastly housewarming party he throws when they move to Piedmont, New Jersey, in 1977 tells us almost everything we need to know about Abe Green in the nine opening pages. He's overbearing, he's needy, and he flashes his family's accomplishments as if they were credentials. (Jacob "reads Hebrew so beautifully it'll make you cry," Dara "swims like a fish . . . always top three," etc.) As Jacob narrates the story from his 10th to 15th years, we see the grim effects of Abe's compulsive personality. He's an insane perfectionist; after Jacob's bar mitzvah, the boy has to write 20 thank-yous a night, "each note will be individually checked for proper spelling, grammar, syntax, and word choice," and when the poor kid falls short, Abe throws his usual screaming tantrum. He never actually hits anyone, but the verbal and psychological abuse are truly scary. Wife Claire finally has enough and moves out in 1981-of course, Abe demands joint custody. The author realistically shows Claire as a loving mother who nonetheless fails her children by being too occupied by her new marriage and career to fully protect them from Abe. Eldest son Asher simply defies Dad, but Jacob can't so quickly reject a man whose love he feels even as it drives him to desperation. In the most brutally funny scene here, Abe "apologizes" for the thank-you card tantrum while driving Jacob to the hospital (he's broken his wrist smashing a wall), then begins chattering about plans for an Annie Hall party while his white-lipped son counts the blocks to the ER. Though Jacob learns near story's end he that can't depend on Asher torescue him, there's no real resolution in this primal scream ripped from adolescence: it's just painfully honest and surprisingly compassionate. Compulsively readable, in a horrifying sort of way. What will Braff do next now that he's got that off his chest? Author tour. Agent: Sonia Pabley/Rosenstone & Wender

Biography
Joshua Braff has an M.F.A. in creative writing. He grew up in New Jersey and now lives with his wife and children in Berkeley, California.

Customer Reviews

Number of Reviews: 7
Average Rating: ★★★★☆

Booklist starred 07/01/04
Library Journal 08/01/04

Voice of Youth Advocates (V.O.Y.A.) 02/01/05
Wilson's Senior High School 12/01/05

Kirkus Review 06/15/04
School Library Journal 12/01/04
Wilson's Fiction 03/16/06

Full-Text Reviews

Booklist starred (July 2004 (Vol. 100, No. 21))
Like a child, Jacob Green's father, Abram, wants what he wants when he wants it and will throw a temper tantrum if he doesn't get it. What Abram wants most of all is the perfect suburban Jewish family--perfectly intelligent, perfectly religious, and perfect at obeying thy father. Braff's rich, moving, and very funny first novel begins with a 1977 housewarming party at which Abram dramatically introduces each member of his family while the four children and their mother seethe with resentment at being paraded as testaments to Abram's greatness. Jacob's present-tense, first-person narration keeps the pace quick, and the exquisite plotting ensures that Jacob's growing emotional turmoil is paralleled by metaphorically resonant real-life events. To survive and mentally escape his father's cruel, perverse love, young Jacob shares hilariously unthinkable thoughts--the funniest are the hypothetical bar mitzvah thank-you notes in which Jacob thanks people for Jerusalem stone bookends and the like and then details his lust for his live-in nanny before signing "Love, Jacob."Readers will adore Jacob, but Braff's greater accomplishment is describing the boy's complex relationship with his father so well that we are forced to see the cruel, self-obsessed Abram as something more than a mere monster of ego.

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Kirkus Review (June 15, 2004)
Scarifyingly funny debut limns a suburban boy's struggle to cope with the Jewish Father from Hell.

The ghastly housewarming party he throws when they move to Piedmont, New Jersey, in 1977 tells us almost everything we need to know about Abe Green in the nine opening pages. He's overbearing, he's needy, and he flashes his family's accomplishments as if they were credentials. (Jacob "reads Hebrew so beautifully it'll make you cry," Dara "swims like a fish . . . always top three," etc.) As Jacob narrates the story from his 10th to 15th years, we see the grim effects of Abe's compulsive personality. He's an insane perfectionist; after Jacob's bar mitzvah, the boy has to write 20 thank-yous a night, "each note will be individually checked for proper spelling, grammar, syntax, and word choice," and when the poor kid falls short, Abe throws his usual screaming tantrum. He never actually hits anyone, but the verbal and psychological abuse are truly scary. Wife Claire finally has enough and moves out in 1981-of course, Abe demands joint custody. The author realistically shows Claire as a loving mother who nonetheless fails her children by being too occupied by her new marriage and career to fully protect them from Abe. Eldest son Asher simply defies Dad, but Jacob can't so quickly reject a man whose love he feels even as it drives him to desperation. In the most brutally funny scene here, Abe "apologizes" for the thank-you card tantrum while driving Jacob to the hospital (he's broken his wrist smashing a wall), then begins chattering about plans for an Annie Hall party while his white-lipped son counts the blocks to the ER. Though Jacob learns near story's end he that can't depend on Asher to rescue him, there's no real resolution in this primal scream ripped from adolescence: it's just painfully honest and surprisingly compassionate.

Compulsively readable, in a horrifying sort of way. What will

ALA American Library Association

View the Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults in 2005.

Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults for 2005

Braff, Joshua. ***The Unthinkable Thoughts of Jacob Green.*** Workman Publishing Co.: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2004. 1-56512-420-0.

Curtis, Christopher Paul. ***Bucking the Sarge.*** Random House Children's Books: Wendy Lamb Books, 2004. 0-385-32307-7.

Hoose, Phillip M. ***The Race to Save the Lord God Bird.*** Melanie Kroupa Books, 2004. 0-374-36173-8.

Levithan, David. ***The Realm of Possibility.*** Random House Children's Books: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 2004. 0-375-82845-1.

Marchetta, Melina. ***Saving Francesca.*** Random House Children's Books: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 2004. 0-375-82982-2.

Morpurgo, Michael. ***Private Peaceful.*** Scholastic, 2004. 0-439-63648-5.

Oppel, Kenneth. ***Airborn.*** HarperCollins Children's Book Group: Eos, 2004. 0-06-053180-0.

Rapp, Adam. ***Under the Wolf, Under the Dog.*** Candlewick Press, 2004. 0-7636-1818-7.

Saenz, Benjamin Alire. ***Sammy and Juliana in Hollywood.*** Cinco Puntos Press, 2004. 0-938317-81-4.

Weeks, Sarah. ***So B. It: a novel.*** HarperCollins Children's Books: Laura Geringer Books, 2004. 0-06-623622-3.

NORTH
KANSAS CITY
SCHOOLS
est. 1913

Educational Support Services – Paul Fregeau, Executive Director – 816.413.5041

February 28, 2008

Re: Request for Reconsideration of Materials

Dear _____

Please accept this letter as a follow up to Ms. Jill Smith's phone notification to you regarding the meeting to reconsider the book "The Unthinkable Thoughts of Jacob Green". A meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, March 6, 2008 at 3:00 p.m. at the Administrative Center, 2000 NE. 46th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64116. When you arrive, the receptionist will direct you to the meeting location.

Thank you for following the proper process and making us aware of your concerns. If you have any questions, please call me at (816) 413-5041.

Sincerely,

Dr. Paul Fregeau KJ

Paul Fregeau, Ed.D.
Executive Director
Educational Support Services

kjj

Pc: Ms. Jill Smith, Library Media Coordinator

FILE: KLB-AF

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF MATERIALS

Author: JOSHUA BRAFF

Format: BOOK

Title: THE UNTHINKABLE THOUGHTS OF JACOB GREEN

Publisher (if known): ARAGALVIN BOOKS

Request Initiated By: [redacted]

Telephone: [redacted] Address: [redacted]

City: KC. MO Zip: 64118

1. Did you read or view the entire book or material? ☐ Yes ☒ No
 If not, what parts did you read or view? Please be specific.
 PLEASE READ PAGES 93, 146-147, 235-236
 THERE ARE OTHER, SHORTER EXAMPLES THROUGHOUT

2. What are your specific objections to the educational use of this material?
 AFTER YOU READ THE PAGES REFERENCED ABOVE,
 DO YOU THINK IT IS APPROPRIATE?

3. What would you like your library/school to do about this work?
 ☐ Do not assign/lend it to my child: _____
 ☒ Return it to the staff selection committee/department for re-evaluation.
 ☐ Other, please explain: _____

Signature: [redacted] Date: 2/5/08

* * * * * * *

Note: ***The reader is encouraged to review policies and/or procedures for related information in this administrative area.***

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